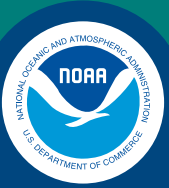


Welcome!



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Scoping Meeting for the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Actions Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Who is NMFS?

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is a federal agency that is responsible for protecting and improving survival of Hawaiian monk seals as required by two laws—the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

What is a Hawaiian monk seal?

A Hawaiian monk seal is an endangered species that lives only throughout the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) and the Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI). Hawaiian monk seals existed for about 10 million years and they are the only warm water tropical seals.

How many Hawaiian monk seals are there and why is the population declining?

Only about 1,100 - 1,200 Hawaiian monk seals remain and the population is declining by 4 percent each year. The population is declining because there is:

- Low juvenile (less than 3 years old) survival due to starvation, shark predation, and entanglement
- Few maturing females, so fewer pups are born
- Low birth rate

What is “Scoping” and what is the purpose of this “Scoping” Meeting?

“Scoping” is the part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that gives you a chance to share your thoughts, concerns, and comments with NMFS. By sharing this with NMFS, they can know what is specifically important to address when they move onto the next step in the NEPA process.

Objectives of this meeting are:

- Provide information on why Hawaiian monk seals are declining and what NMFS is considering to do about it
- Review the purpose and need for the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS)
- Identify issues and potential alternatives that should be considered in the PEIS
- Provide an opportunity for public comments on this process

This PEIS...

- WILL NOT result in any new regulations (for example, on fishing or public access)
- WILL NOT result in new closure areas or restrictions
- WILL evaluate the potential effects of proposed activities (such as translocation and vaccinations) on Hawaiian monk seals, other marine mammals, fish, and wildlife, cultural resources, and socioeconomics.



Hawaiian Monk Seal PEIS

What is NMFS proposing to do?

NMFS is proposing research and enhancement activities to help improve Hawaiian monk seal survival so they will no longer be considered endangered. This action requires NMFS to prepare a PEIS.

Why does this need to be done?

Purpose:

- Promote the long-term viability of the Hawaiian monk seals in the wild
- Allow for reclassification to threatened status and, ultimately, removal from listing under the Endangered Species Act

Need:

- To help slow the decline in Hawaiian monk seal populations and supplement the population in the NWHI

Why is NMFS preparing a PEIS?

NMFS is preparing a PEIS to meet the requirements of NEPA. This law requires that when there is a major federal action, the agency making the action must consider and disclose the impacts to the human environment. Issuing funds and/or a permit to do research or enhancement activities on an endangered species is considered a “major federal action.” NMFS is preparing this document to look at a range of activities that could be done to help Hawaiian monk seals increase their total population to a point where they are no longer considered an “endangered species.”

Alternatives

Possible themes that have been identified for alternatives are presented in the table below. The scoping process will help finalize the scope and structure of the alternatives.

	Alternative 1 (No Action; Current Permit Expires in 2014)	Alternative 2 (Status Quo)	Alternative 3 (Enhanced Implementation / Proposed Action)
Research and Enhancement Activities	No new activities authorized after permit expires in 2014. (NMFS ESA-MMPA Permit No. 10137-04 issued to NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population assessment (e.g., counting, resighting, marking for identification, flipper tags);• Health and disease studies (e.g., tissue sampling, morphometric measurements);• Foraging studies (e.g., telemetry, scat collection);• De-worming research (e.g., fecal samples, testing anti-parasite treatments);• Translocation of weaned pups within the NWHI to improve juvenile survival;• Mitigation of fishery interactions (e.g., disentanglement, removal of fishing hooks); and• Mitigation of adult male aggression (e.g., removal and relocation of aggressive males).	Existing and additional activities would include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vaccination studies (including potential vaccination);• De-worming;• Archipelago-wide translocations to improve juvenile survival; and• Behavioral modification (developing aversive conditioning tools to discourage undesirable seal behavior in the MHI, such as interactions with humans or domestic animals).



Behavioral Modification

Why?

- Keep wild seals wild
- Prevent undesirable interactions between seals and people
- Foster a more natural seal/human co-existence

NMFS is considering...

- Strategically moving some recently weaned pups to prevent them from becoming socialized to humans
- Research on how to modify seal behavior
- Developing tools to manage seal behavior

Seal Translocation

Why?

- Improve female survival and bolster NWHI populations
- Maintain natural trend in MHI

Steps in the process (NWHI -> MHI -> NWHI given current trends)

1. Identify female weaned seal pups in NWHI to be moved

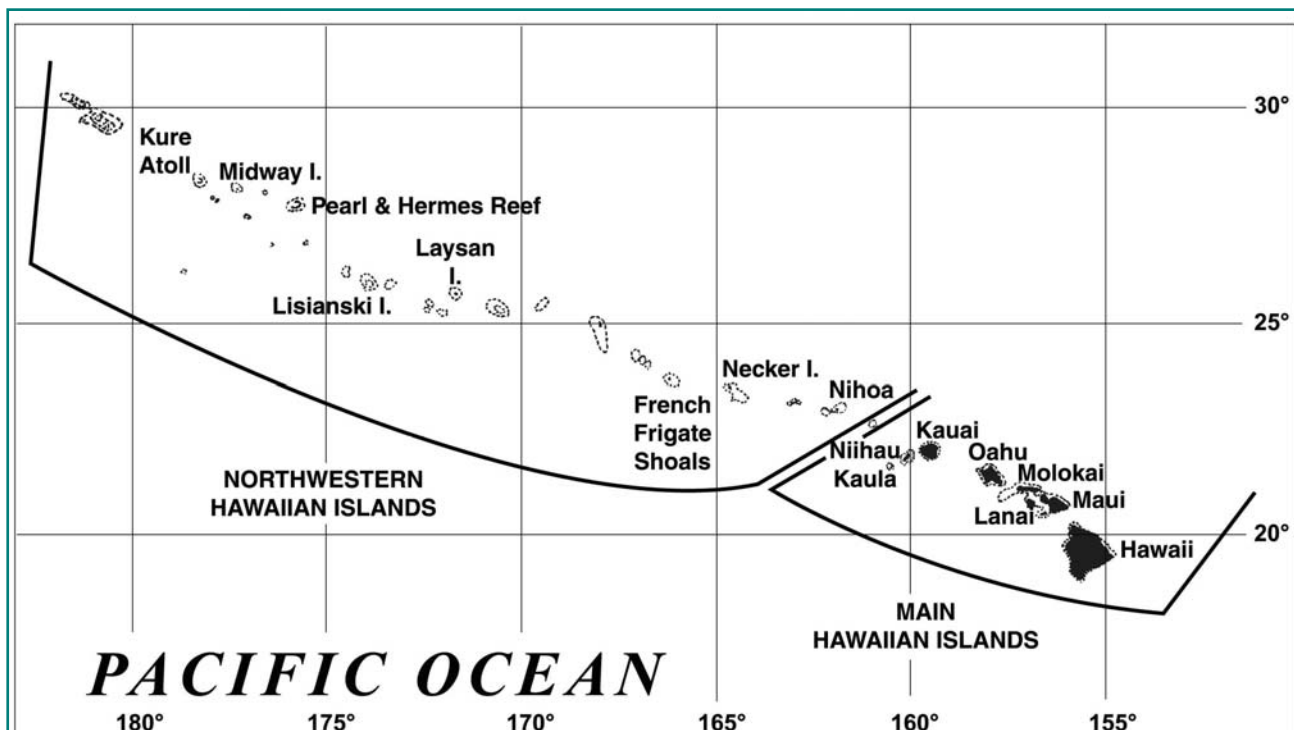
2. Take them to MHI and release amongst wild population
3. Manage and monitor seals while in MHI
4. Return seals to NWHI when 3+ years old
5. Monitor returned seals in NWHI to evaluate program success

Key Points

- Phased-in process – start with small numbers, continue only if successful
- Starting in 2012 – at the earliest

Project Schedule

- Notice of Intent – published October 1, 2010
- Scoping Period – October 1 – November 15, 2010
- Scoping Meetings – October 20 – 29, 2010
- Draft PEIS published – Spring 2011
- Public Comment Period on Draft PEIS (minimum 45-days) – Spring/Summer 2011
- Public Hearings – Summer 2011
- Final PEIS published – Fall 2011
- Record of Decision – Early 2012



Project Area

How can I make my comments count?

When making comments, it is helpful to consider some of the following questions and points:

- How do you think research and enhancement activities on Hawaiian monk seals would impact you and what you do?
- What do you like, and what do you not like about NMFS conducting research and enhancement activities on Hawaiian monk seals?
- Give ideas about how to address the Hawaiian monk seal's population decline.
- Give ideas about how to mitigate (lessen or avoid) impacts to you that might be caused by research and enhancement activities.
- Give reference to, or attach any supporting data, reports, studies, etc.

We welcome any other thoughts, concerns, or insights you might have regarding permitting recovery actions for Hawaiian monk seals.

Scoping Meeting Procedures

Please sign up to speak at the registration desk if you have not already done so. After a brief presentation public comments will begin. Speakers will be called in the order they signed in and unregistered speakers will follow.

When providing verbal comment:

- State your name and affiliation (if any)
- Stay within the time limit, additional time as schedule allows

Please leave written comments or additional materials with project team staff.

**Comments are being recorded by project team staff*

General Ground Rules of the Meeting

- Please make sure pagers and cell phones are off or on vibrate
- Please have mutual respect—please allow others their turn to speak without interruptions
- Please stay within designated time limits
- Please take private conversations outside this meeting room.

For More Information

If you need more information after tonight please feel free to:

Visit the project website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/hawaiianmonkseal.htm> or contact project team staff:

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Honolulu, HI 96814
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Providing Comments After Tonight

If you do not feel comfortable giving your comments verbally tonight or if you want to take some more time to put your comments together, you may submit written comments, and mail to the project address, submit via e-mail, or leave the comment with project staff tonight. Pre-addressed comment forms are available at the registration desk.

